

28-1941

Age-Herald

Birmingham, Ala.

COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

Sheriff W. H. Holcombe, of Mobile, appears to be far off base when he blames the state of Alabama for the suicide of a "temporarily mentally deranged" man in Mobile County Jail yesterday. News dispatches say the man was placed in jail Tuesday and hanged himself Wednesday.

The Mobile sheriff uses this instance to reiterate a recent protest in which he had said "the state of Alabama should do everything possible immediately to remedy the deplorable lack of hospitalization facilities for our insane patients." The sheriff had filed that protest several weeks ago after two reportedly insane persons had died in Mobile County Jail.

Best answer to the sheriff's complaint came immediately from Dr. W. D. Partlow, superintendent of the Alabama State Hospitals. Dr. Partlow declared that applications of eligible white patients are accepted on the very day the applications are received at the hospital. There is now no waiting list for white persons. In so far as Negroes are concerned, there is a waiting list of 40 or 50, and new Negro patients can be admitted only as vacancies occur.

Sheriff Holcombe must know that it was manifestly impossible for hospital authorities to know anything about the Mobile case, which had not even been reported to the hospital. In view of the fact that the man had been placed in jail only Tuesday, sufficient time had not elapsed to receive any application here, if one had even been made out in Mobile. News dispatches fail to say whether or not such an application was prepared.

In his previous protest the Mobile sheriff failed to say whether or not the patients mentioned were white persons or Negroes.

The crux of this situation is that communities throughout the state have a responsibility for the temporary protection of insane patients. Dr. Partlow told Sheriff Holcombe after the previous protest that the hospital officials advise against incarceration of insane patients in jail. He believes that such patients should be placed in local hospitals under proper care until admission at state hospitals. Such admission is available almost immediately, in so far as white patients are concerned.

There is an admitted inadequacy in state support of the hospitals for insane persons. At present the inadequacy as it pertains to white persons is based upon the low per capita allowance for care of patients and upkeep of the hospitals. The Dixon administration has helped materially by increasing this per capita somewhat, although the present figure is far below the average in states of the nation. More facilities are needed to care for Negroes.

Protection and treatment of the mentally ill in Alabama is a continuous growing problem. Additional funds for more facilities, better maintenance and improvement all along the line are always needed.

Another thing needed is the cooperation of communities and acceptance of community responsibility everywhere in Alabama to provide at least temporary care for prospective patients.

There is a mighty good case for more adequate support of our state hospitals, but Sheriff Holcombe's vigorous protest in this instance is a flimsy affair.—Tuscaloosa News

Age-Herald

Birmingham, Ala.

PARTLOW PROTESTS JAILING OF INSANE

TUSCALOOSA, Ala., July 9—(AP)—Dr. W. D. Partlow, superintendent of Alabama state hospitals, said Wednesday applications for admission of eligible, insane white persons were accepted upon receipt and available facilities were meeting current demands.

He said, however, there was a waiting list of 40 to 50 Negroes seeking admittance to the insane hospital for members of that race, at Mt. Vernon.

Dr. Partlow's statement followed criticism by Sheriff W. H. Holcombe, of Mobile, who reported that a deranged man, committed to jail there, had hanged himself. Two other deaths were reported there recently.

"I protested against the mentally ill being held in jail," Holcombe said, adding that "the state of Alabama should do everything possible immediately to remedy the deplorable lack of hospitalization facilities for our insane patients."

Dr. Partlow said he had written Holcombe recently, suggesting that insane persons should be placed temporarily in local hospitals, not jails, pending admission to the state hospitals, which would be a matter of "a very few days" with respect to white persons.

No application was received from the Mobile sheriff, he said, for admission of the man who hanged himself and who was identified by chief deputy sheriff Fred Hudoff at Mobile, as B. H. Strickland, 32, a shipyard worker.

While there is a waiting list because of insufficient hospitalization room for Negroes, the superintendent said new patients are accepted as fast as vacancies occurred.

"Naturally," he continued, "the hospital here has no way of knowing of insane cases over the state until it is notified by local authorities."

ALABAMA

Birmingham, Ala. News

July 13, 1941

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The Mobile sheriff uses this instance to reiterate a recent protest in which he had said "the state of Alabama should do everything possible immediately to remedy the deplorable lack of hospitalization facilities for our insane patients." The sheriff had filed that protest several weeks ago after two reportedly insane persons had died in Mobile County Jail.

Best answer to the sheriff's complaint came immediately from Dr. W. D. Partlow, superintendent of the Alabama State Hospitals. Dr. Partlow declared that applications of eligible white patients are accepted on the very day the applications are received at the hospital. There is now no waiting list for white persons. In so far as Negroes are concerned, there is a waiting list of 40 or 50, and new Negro patients can be admitted only as vacancies occur.

Sheriff Holcombe must know that it was manifestly impossible for hospital authorities to know anything about the Mobile case, which had not even been reported to the hospital. In view of the fact that the man had been placed in jail only Tuesday, sufficient time had not elapsed to receive any application here, if one had even been made out in Mobile. News dispatches fail to say whether or not such an application was prepared.

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Birmingham, Ala., Age-Herald

July 11, 1941

Back To Bedlam?

That there should be a waiting list for admission to insane asylums seems incredible, but it is true in Alabama, at least so far as Negroes are concerned. Facilities are inadequate for the white insane, according to Dr. W. D. Partlow, superintendent of state hospitals, but there is a waiting list of 40 to 50 Negroes seeking admittance to the Mt. Vernon insane hospital for that race.

His statement on the question is in response to criticism by Sheriff W. H. Holcombe, of Mobile, following an insane man's hanging himself in the Mobile jail, where he was being held pending his admission to an insane hospital. "I protested against the mentally ill being held in jail," Sheriff Holcombe says and goes on to demand that the state "do everything possible immediately to remedy the deplorable lack of hospitalization facilities for our insane patients."

Dr. Partlow counters that he had written Sheriff Holcombe recently, advising that insane persons be placed in local hospitals, rather than the jail, while awaiting admission to a state institution, and further says that no application for admission of the man who hanged himself had been received.

We are not interested in establishing blame in this particular instance. Certainly the insane should not be jailed, but should be given proper medical care and prevented from doing themselves harm while in a deranged condition. And the state of Alabama should provide hospitalization facilities as adequate for Negroes as are its present facilities for white patients.

From the standpoint of medical efficiency and of plain humanity Alabama's insane hospitals are outstanding. Our nation-wide reputation for enlightened treatment of the insane must not be clouded by permitting such medieval practices as resulted in the Mobile incident.

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LOUISIANA

Times-Picayune

New Orleans, La.

Better Care for Insane

It took no public health survey to disclose that the old state machine made an abominable job of operating the state hospitals for the insane. That plants and equipment were allowed to run down, and the standard of treatment to decline while it rapidly improved elsewhere, was indicated long ago. Politicians were permitted to fatten on appropriations that should have gone into services for the ill. The regression of these institutions is now indicated by the report made by the United States public health service for Governor Jones: "It must be remembered that considerable improvement in conditions and activities will be necessary before the institutions attain the level that was traveled some years ago."

The important thing ahead is to reconstruct the services at these hospitals rather than tume over the past mismanagement. Under the new director of institutions, J. E. Snee, some of the improvements suggested by the public health report are already being carried through. Quarters, treatment and the diet of the inmates are being bettered. Politics is out, and the money appropriated for the hospitals is going for the purposes intended.

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To raise the institutions at Jackson and Pineville to the standard recommended, however, will not be an easy or a short task. It probably won't be done within the period of one administration. The cost of repairs and new construction for the long-neglected plants will take some of the money that should normally go into improving the quality of the programs and services.

One thing this administration probably will do is to establish a basis for the support of the insane that will be a guide in meeting future claims upon the treasury for operating these institutions. Presently the state appropriates somewhat more than \$200 per inmate. Can self-sustaining activities at the asylums be developed to a point where that amount will be sufficient to maintain good standards?

The question arises as to whether a practicable long-time program could be developed for reducing the more or less permanent population of the hospitals. The number of inmates has risen to an average of about 6000 for the two institutions and a large proportion of the illness responsible for commitments is preventable. More pre-

vention as a result of health education, and better treatment and training within the hospitals to cure patients and reduce the time of their residence, would greatly improve the picture of the care for the insane in this state.

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NORTH CAROLINA

Greensboro, N. C., Record
February 21, 1941

GROUP TO RECOMMEND NEGRO INSANE SCHOOL

Commission For Inter-Racial
Co-operation Told Institu-
tion Badly Needed.

RALEIGH, Feb. 20.—(AP)—Members of the North Carolina commission on inter-racial co-operation voted today to recommend establishment of a state school for feeble-minded negroes.

The vote followed a talk by William R. Johnson, director of the negro division of the state department of charities and public welfare, in which he asserted that 28,000 feeble-minded negroes in North Carolina lacked appropriate facilities for training.

The Caswell Training school near Kinston trains white feeble-minded.

Dr. H. C. Henry, director of the Virginia State hospital, told the commission of the development of the Virginia state colony for the feeble-minded at Petersburg, and warned the commission that "you must be careful you do not get a penal institution rather than an educational one".

Dr. James Watson, state psychiatrist, told the commission the feeble-minded are trainable but that the state lacks facilities for adequate training.

"The feeble-minded are trained in separate divisions of state insane asylums by instructors largely trained for work with the insane.

"There should definitely be a separate institution for those who have arrested mental development and not victims of mental derangement, or abnormality," he said.

Highlight of the afternoon session was a discussion by Paul Green, the playwright, of his dramatization of "Native Son", a novel by the negro novelist Richard Wright.

The conference was told tonight that "no appeal or threat from any totalitarian power" can deter the negro from "duty and loyalty to our country".

The statement was made by Dean Alfonso Elder of North Carolina College for negroes, one of three speakers who emphasized that men of all races and faiths are "Americans all".

Dr. Frank P. Graham, president of the greater university, said Germany had revealed its weakness by excluding the Jew, and predicted that the United States would demonstrate its strength by providing for Jews and all other minorities.

The Jewish persecution, Dr. Gra-

ham said, is a threat to both protestants and catholics.

Rabbi Fred I. Rypins, of Greensboro, discussed the Jews contribution to American history, beginning with the discovery of the new world by Columbus, who though a Christian in religion was classed by Rabbi Rypins a "a Jew by blood".

He said the Jews had led in social service because "we have understood through our own suffering, somewhat better than others who have suffered, how important social service is to human living".

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PENNSYLVANIA

Tribune
Philadelphia, Pa.

Mistreatment Of Colored Insane Leads To Death Of White Patients

JAN 23 1941

COLORED Philadelphians have a stake in what is transpiring at the State Hospital for the Insane at Byberry. Colored Philadelphians unfortunate enough to have relatives in this institution have known for years that all was not well. Ever so often in the past, colored inmates have been beaten, but the public never knew the facts, or else dismissed the cases with a shrug of the shoulders.

Conditions have gone from bad to worse, and it was only a step from beating the colored insane to beating the white inmates. The death of three white inmates, following unmerciful beatings, has thrown the fat into the fire; and a by-product of the murder of white inmates will be that colored inmates will be beneficiaries of the improved treatment of patients.

The murder of white inmates is a tragic illustration of the danger of condoning lawlessness in the past when the victims were colored. When will Americans wake up to the fact that criminals who kill one race or class will ultimately kill another class?